Stop Trafficking!
AwarenessAdvocacyAction
Anti-Human Trafficking Newsletter • November 2026 • Vol. 24 • No. 11

FOCUS: The focus for this month's newsletter is Missing and Disappeared Indigenous women and girls.

# Introduction: Missing and Disappeared Indigenous Women and Girls

## In Canada

*Despite being only 5% of the population, Indigenous women and girls account for over 50% of trafficking victims and over 15% of female homicides.* ***Indigenous women and girls*** *are six times more likely to be murdered and* ***three times*** *more likely to experience violent victimization than non-Indigenous women and girls. The average age of victims is 30 years.*

*Racism, ongoing colonization, the legacy of residential schools, and historical trauma all play a role. Under policing and lack of access to protective services also leave indigenous women and girls vulnerable to human trafficking and exploitation. To address these issues, implementing community-led protective measures and increasing access to culturally appropriate services are essential. These steps can help reduce vulnerability and improve safety for Indigenous women and girls.*

*Many women and girls who disappear are victims of online sex ads appearing in urban areas and major transportation corridors, despite being a distance from tribal lands. In* ***one case****, an Indigenous woman who went missing in Ontario was identified a short time later as being advertised on an escort website more than one hundred kilometers away, which highlights the swift transition from disappearance into human trafficking. The families and the Indigenous communities do not trust the police, while police services do not communicate with the communities and other service agencies.*

***2025 Missing Indigenous Alerts in Canada Review & Insights*** *states that 65% of the 679 recorded missing alerts for Indigenous women and girls involved minors or youth, with 33 individuals still missing at the end of the year and 14 were found deceased, highlighting the urgent need for protective measures and community engagement.*

## In Mexico

According to a recent article in the Harvard International Review, Indigenous Women: The Invisible Victims of Femicide in Mexico, femicide, or the "intentional murder of women because they are women," has recently become one of Mexico's urgent struggles. Indigenous women are often absent from conversations about femicide, even though Indigenous peoples make up over 15 percent of Mexico's population. Nearly 80 percent of the Indigenous population in Mexico lives in extreme poverty. This, along with aspects of Mexican culture

*(continued on next page)*



and society such as the concept of machismo that degrade women, makes Indigenous women more vulnerable to femicide. Indigenous women, especially those living in underdeveloped areas, do not have as much access to resources and economic opportunities as other Mexican women. Cartels involved in drugs, human trafficking (the third largest illegal industry in Mexico), and arms trafficking have also put Indigenous women in danger.

In addition, Indigenous women, often internally displaced due to rural poverty, migrate to manufacturing centers, like Ciudad Juárez, or tourist hubs. Many become highly susceptible to human trafficking and cartel-related violence. According to the Review, seventy percent of human trafficking victims are Indigenous women.

Due to an acknowledged problem of underreporting or data, the number of disappeared or Indigenous women and girls in Mexico is not known. Human rights groups like the Instituto Mexicano de Derechos Humanos y Democracia (IMDHD) through Red Lupa, an organization that attempts to collect data on the thousands who disappear in Mexico each year, have reported that official databases show a disproportionately low number of total indigenous disappearances overall, historically under 1% of the registry, pointing to a systemic failure by local authorities and state prosecutors to classify ethnic and linguistic background categories during intake properly. Remote rural locations, language barriers (with a significant percentage of indigenous populations not fluent in Spanish), and physical distance from urban registration centers mean many disappearances are never officially filed.

## In the United States

There is no single reliable nationwide data of missing Indigenous women in the U.S. due to inconsistent reporting; however, in 2025, FBI Data reported that 9,687 American Indian and Alaska Native individuals were reported missing across the United States, with women and girls making up the majority of cases at 5,303. Indigenous women continue to face murder rates up to 10 times higher than the national average, and murder is the third leading cause of death for girls and women aged 10-24.

Mainstream media fails to cover many of these cases. Advocacy and tribal groups emphasized that thousands of cases remain underreported, misclassified, or left off official tracking databases due to a lack of interagency communication between local, state, and federal law enforcement. For example, the National Crime Information Center reported that there were 5,712 cases of missing American Indian and Native Alaskan women and girls; however, the U.S. Department of Justice's federal missing persons database only had records of 116 cases. Racism minimization was associated with greater blaming of MMIWG victims and less blaming of societal contributors to this epidemic, and these factors predict greater apathy toward MMIWG and less MMIWG advocacy.

***Sovereign Bodies Institute has reported that over 62% of cases of missing or murdered indigenous women or girls in the United States are excluded from official law enforcement databases.***

The top 10 states with the highest rates of Indigenous missing persons cases included Alaska, Arizona, Oklahoma, Washington, New Mexico, California, Montana, North Carolina, South Dakota, and Texas, indicating regional hotspots that require targeted intervention and resource allocation.

# Doctrine of Discovery

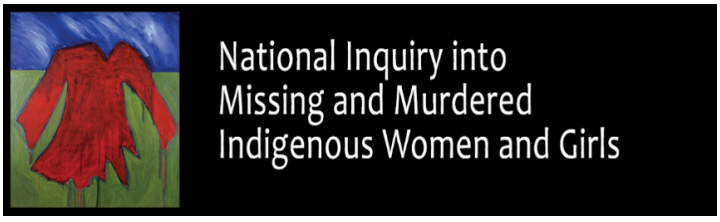
Discrimination towards Indigenous people may be traced back to the Doctrine of Discovery, a legal principle used to justify European control over lands considered uncivilized. Since this doctrine can only be applied to uncivilized areas, Indigenous people are thought by many to be less than human and this idea persists today in countries like the United States, Mexico, and Canada. For example, the Indian Act in Canada continues to make Indigenous people second-class citizens.

Missing Indigenous people were reported from more than 300 locations across Canada in 2025, but the concentration in certain urban centers is striking. Winnipeg, Manitoba recorded 313 alerts alone, far outpacing every other city.

*2025 Missing Indigenous Alerts in Canada Review & Insights*

# Advocacy

## National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

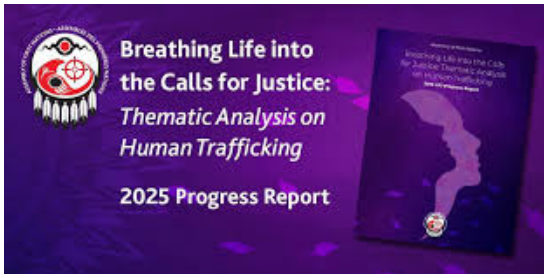



The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls was a Canadian public inquiry, independent of the federal government, that studied the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women crisis, which has resulted in thousands of lives lost and ongoing community trauma across Canada.

The study included reviews of law enforcement documents as well as community hearings and testimonies. The final report of the inquiry concluded that the high level of violence directed at Indigenous women and girls in Canada (First Nations, Inuit, Métis) is "caused by state actions and inactions rooted in colonialism and colonial ideologies."

It also concluded that the crisis constituted an ongoing "race, identity and gender-based genocide," highlighting the deep impact of colonial history on Indigenous communities. To learn more about the inquiry, or find out how to participate in or work for the inquiry, please visit the inquiry's website.

On June 3, 2025, marking the sixth anniversary of the National Inquiry's Final Report, the Assembly of First Nations released Breathing Life into the Calls for Justice, emphasizing that regional responses to the exploitation and trafficking of Indigenous women and gender-diverse people remain underfunded and inconsistent.



# Advocacy

## Disappearances of Women and Girls in Mexico, An Omission of State

In a March 2025 report, Disappearances of Women and Girls in Mexico, An Omission of State, by the International Federation for Human Rights states that when disappearances are reported, they are often classified as "hogares expulsores"—households where individuals facing violence, persecution, or socioeconomic hardships are forced to flee. This systemic issue highlights how biases and misclassifications perpetuate injustice, making families feel their cases are not taken seriously. When cases are finally opened, they are often misdirected by investigators due to sexist and/or racist biases, especially when they concern indigenous women and focus on their past or life choices rather than on the context and causes of the disappearances. These practices constitute a form of violence that revictimizes and blames families and diverts investigations from their true purpose: finding the missing person and identifying or prosecuting those responsible.

In July 2025, Amnesty International reported that women who search for their loved ones among the more than 128,000 disappeared and missing persons in Mexico additionally face a growing number of impacts and violence, which have so far claimed the lives of at least 16 of these women. Women searchers mentioned that it was difficult to get recognized as victims and that the support provided by state victims commissions is inadequate, delayed, and culturally inappropriate. Challenges for obtaining support are even greater for Indigenous women searchers and the families of disappeared migrants.

The United States Senate passed S.Res.200 designating May 5th as the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, honoring victims across tribal nations.

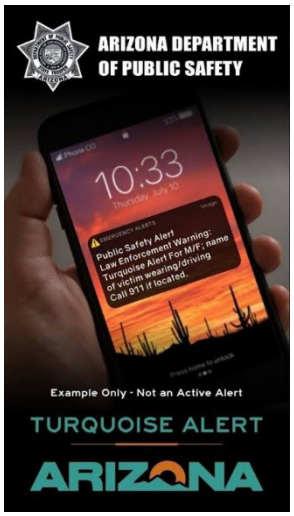
## Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Day

In January 2026, the United States House of Representatives adopted a resolution to declare February 22, 2026, as "Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Justice and Awareness Day" to honor those who have been lost, those who are still missing, and the families and communities who continue to seek justice.



# Turquoise Alert

A Turquoise Alert is an emergency notification system in several states in the United States used to quickly share public information regarding missing, endangered individuals under the age of 65 who disappear under suspicious or unexplained circumstances, often specifically prioritizing or including missing Indigenous persons.




States like Arizona Department of Public Safety and New Mexico Department of Public Safety operate these systems to bridge the gap when cases do not strictly meet the rigid criteria of an AMBER Alert or silver/senior alert.

In the United States, 95 percent of cases of Missing or Disappeared Indigenous women and girls identified by the Urban Indian Health Institute had not been covered by the mainstream media.

*https://www.niwrc.org/mmiwr-awareness*

Months before the World Cup in Mexico, authorities reported that hundreds of bags with human remains were found within a 10-mile radius of Akron Stadium, Guadalajara's World Cup venue. In just four of the graves found near the stadium, groups of families of missing people counted at least 500 bags.

# Action

## Canada's Missing Indigenous Women: Families Fighting for Justice

In Kitigan Zibi, a First Nation Reserve, Bridget Tolley has spent years searching for answers after her mother, Gladys Tolley, was struck and killed by a police car in 2001. What began as one family's fight for truth became part of a much wider struggle for missing and murdered Indigenous women across Canada. Through vigils, portraits, marches and public testimony, Bridget and other families keep the names and faces of their loved ones alive. Their fight is not only about grief. It is about justice, memory, and a system that too often leaves Indigenous families unheard. From the Sisters in Spirit vigils to the children left behind, this episode follows the grandmothers, mothers, and families who refuse to let their loved ones disappear into silence. This is a powerful portrait of Indigenous resilience, where remembrance becomes an act of resistance. Please click **here** to view this documentary on Canada's Missing Indigenous Women.

# Action

In the United States, resources and tracking for active and historical cases can be monitored via the FBI Missing Persons database and the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center.




Please click here to view this short video on the unsolved cases of Canada's missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls.

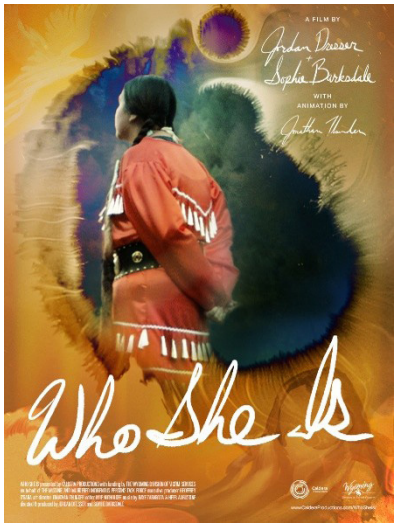
Please click here to view a short video from families who shared stories of missing and murdered Indigenous women and relatives in New Mexico.

Please click here to view this webinar on Mexico's Disappeared: The struggle against impunity.






Historical trauma and current risk factors make Indigenous people vulnerable to many forms of victimization including labor and sex trafficking. Education and understanding of the prevalence of human trafficking among Native populations is vital. How do we build trust and work in partnership with Tribes and Tribal programs, develop meaningful collaborations, and work to meet the needs of Native survivors of human trafficking? What can we do to provide culturally appropriate programming? What are the linkages between human trafficking and missing or murdered Indigenous people? Please click here to view Human Trafficking in Indian Country presented by Survive and Thrive.




"Who She Is" is a 2022 documentary film that focuses primarily on the Wind River Indian Reservation in Wyoming and tells the personal stories of four Indigenous women—Abbi, Sheila, Jocelyn, and Lela—who became victims of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) crisis.

# Canadian Museum of Human Rights

**Indigenous Women and Their Rights to Safety and Justice Exhibition**

**May 3, 2025 – April 5, 2030**

Indigenous women, girls and Two-Spirit people are six times more likely to be murdered than other women in Canada. An art installation by Jaime Black-Morsette and KC Adams called *Only in Darkness Can We See the Stars* gives us hope that Indigenous women can reclaim their power and place in their communities.

Please click here to listen to a podcast on *Honoring Mexico's Disappeared.*





## Red Dress Day

Red Dress Day in Canada is commemorated on May 5 each year to bring awareness to the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirit People.

Empty red dresses hung in public spaces symbolize the tragic loss, absence, and lives cut short of Indigenous victims. The color red holds deep spiritual meaning in many Indigenous cultures as the only color spirits can see.

# The Truth Behind Canada's Missing Girls | BBC Documentary

Stacey Dooley travels to Canada to expose the ongoing tragedy of hundreds of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, starting with the Highway of Tears, where nearly 40 lives have vanished. You'll hear the heartbreaking story of a 14-year-old girl found mutilated on a remote road and learn how a lack of public transportation, racism, and underfunded police investigations leave Indigenous women vulnerable to violence. In Edmonton, Indigenous women forced into the sex trade by people they trusted share stories of abuse and loss, while volunteers track license plates to protect those at risk. The film also confronts Canada's history of residential schools, where generations of Indigenous children were stripped of their culture and subjected to abuse, fueling cycles of poverty and domestic violence. Follow a family still searching for justice after their daughter's disappearance, and witness calls for change that demand Canada face its past and safeguard its Indigenous communities. Please click here to view this documentary.

# Action

## National Indigenous Women's Resource Center

Providing national leadership to promote safety for Native women and communities by supporting culturally grounded grassroots advocacy. The National Indigenous Women's Resource Center, Inc. (NIWRC) is a Native-led nonprofit organization committed to ending violence against Native women, children, and communities. We provide national leadership in addressing violence within Tribal communities by amplifying the voices of grassroots advocates and offering resources, technical assistance, training, and policy development. Our work strengthens Tribal sovereignty, creating lasting change to protect Native women and their families.

The Assembly of First Nations advocates for First Nations in Canada, facilitating regional discussions and dialogue, advocacy efforts and campaigns, legal and policy analysis, and building relationships between First Nations, governments, businesses and the general public. They advocate to end the critical situation of violence, disappearance, and murder of First Nations women, girls, and gender-diverse people.

## The United States Dept. of Justice: Missing & Murdered Indigenous Persons

The Department of Justice is committed to addressing the persistent violence endured by Native American families and communities across the country, including by working with Tribal nations to address the important issues of missing or murdered indigenous persons. The Department recognizes the broader public safety and public health concerns that underlie many of these cases and require solutions from across the Department's components.

## That Day

*By Teresa Lefranc*

*To the dead women in Juarez (Mexico),*
*to many others and their families*

Years of mourning,
years of not knowing about you.
What could have happened?

The phone rings and my heart trembles.
Someone knocks at the door,
and I am afraid to open.

Will it be good news?
Or will they tell me they
finally found your body?
No, please God, no.

I see pictures in the newspaper
and my heart stops.
And I think how it is possible
so much evil? So much rage?

Memories come to my mind of that morning
when you said goodbye before going to work,
and told me "Mom, see you in the evening,"
hugged me and kissed my forehead.

Who would say that day
I lived the longest night of my life?
Waiting to see you arrive, waiting for a call,
and nothing...

Since then, I am walking dead.
Sometimes I imagine that you open the door
and tell me "Mommy, I'm here."
But nothing happens.

I just know I'm still alive because
a deep pain pierces my chest,
and I feel tears rolling down my cheeks.

ALLIANCE TO END HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Founded and Supported by U.S. Catholic Sisters

***Click on the links below to visit the websites of our sponsors***

- Adorers of the Blood of Christ
- Adrian Dominicans
- Benedictine Sisters of Chicago
- Benedictine Sisters of Mount St. Scholastica, Atchison, KS
- Congregation of Notre Dame
- Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes
- Congregation of S. Joseph
- Conrad N. Hilton Fund for Sisters
- Dominican Sisters of Houston, TX
- Dominican Sisters of Mission San Jose, CA
- Dominican Sisters of Peace
- Dominican Sisters of San Rafael, CA
- Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa, WI
- Dominican Sisters of Sparkill
- Dominican Sisters of Springfield, IL
- Felician Sisters of North America
- Franciscan Sisters of Peace
- Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration
- Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart
- Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters
- Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- Marianites of Holy Cross
- Maryknoll Sisters
- Medical Mission Sisters
- Medical Missionaries of Mary
- Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary
- Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters
- Presentation Sisters, Aberdeen
- Presentation Sisters, San Francisco
- Racine Dominicans
- Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary
- Religious Sisters of Charity
- School Sisters of Notre Dame, North America
- School Sisters of St. Francis of Christ the King
- Sisters of Bon Secours
- Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati
- Sisters of Charity of Halifax
- Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth
- Sisters of Charity of New York
- Sisters of Charity of St. Joan Antida
- Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word - Houston
- Sisters of Charity of Nazareth
- Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill
- Sisters of Mercy Catherine's Residence
- Sisters of Mercy of the Americas
- Sisters of Notre Dame of the United States
- Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, USA
- Sisters of Providence, Mother Joseph Province
- Sisters of St. Chretienne
- Sisters of St. Dominic - Racine, WI
- Sisters of St. Francis of Clinton
- Sisters of St. Francis of Colorado Springs
- Sisters of St. Francis of Dubuque
- Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate
- Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia
- Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God
- Sisters of St. Francis Rochester, MN
- Sisters of St. Joseph of Baden
- Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet
- Sisters of St. Joseph of Chestnut Hill Philadelphia
- Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny, USA & Canada Provinces
- Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia, KS
- Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange
- Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament
- Sisters of the Divine Savior
- Sisters of the Good Shepherd
- Sisters of the Holy Cross
- Sisters of the Holy Family
- Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary
- Sisters of the Humility of Mary
- Sisters of the Precious Blood
- Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother
- Society of the Sacred Heart
- St. Mary's Institute of O'Fallon

*The Anti-Trafficking Newsletter is dedicated exclusively to fostering an exchange of information among Alliance members, organizations and concerned persons collaborating to eliminate all forms of human trafficking. Click here to access previous issues of Stop Trafficking! To contribute information, please contact: stoptrafficking@feliciansisters.org. Editor: Maryann Agnes Mueller, CSSF. Layout & Design: Mary Francis Lewandowski, CSSF. Translated into Spanish by Teresa Lefranc.*